



THE LEGEND OF THE BELL WITCH
Adapted from the NBC Production Library of Congress Hidden History,
aired Sept 14, 1941

CAST:

Narrator	Lucy
Voice 1	Spirit
Voice 2	John
Voice 3	

Notes on Vocabulary:

Crescendo: The loudest point after a gradual increase of sound or raising of voice

Malevolent: Having an evil quality, hostile

Querulous: Complaining in a whining manner, whiney

Tarnation: An old-fashioned word to express frustration

MUSIC:	Theme
NARRATOR:	Hidden History
MUSIC:	<i>OUT</i>
VOICE 1:	The legend of the Bell Witch....
VOICE 2:	The story of a dark spirit and ghastly revenge....
VOICE 3:	A growing chuckle breaks into ghostly laughter
SOUND:	<i>Crack of Lightning: Roll of Thunder Fading to Background Behind Whistling Wind Fade and Hold Behind...</i>
LUCY	(OLD VOICE, QUERULOUS) ...Spirit! Spirit! ... Where are you?
SOUND:	<i>Quick twisting whistling wind, fades in very fast then stops short.</i>
SPIRIT:	I am here ...Lucy Bell.
LUCY:	How many times must a body call you? The fire is getting low and It is a cold night... get some wood on it, please.
SPIRIT:	For you my dear, instantly.



SOUND: *Clunking of Wood logs; Quick increasing Crackle of Fire.*

LUCY: Ah, that's better... it takes a high fire to warm old bones like mine.

SOUND: *Crack of Lightning in Background; Distant Thunder*

NARRATOR: Every land has its legends, and in a land as broad as America there are hundreds of tall tales and small tales told nightly around the campfires and fireplaces of a story-telling people. Today the National Broadcasting Company in collaboration with the Library of Congress presents another in its series, HIDDEN HISTORY. The stories told in this series are taken from the diaries, documents and personal letters in the Library of Congress.

In the Library are the records of a legend of the old South and the Bell Witch of Tennessee (who was not a witch at all but a haunt, a spirit). It is a story told and retold so often it has branched out like a growing tree, with each new yarn-spinner adding a new branch. Here is the story of a dark, malevolent, and sometimes humorous spirit, who plagued the Bell family until a man died, a woman lost her fear, and the Bell Witch fulfilled her ghostly revenge...

SOUND: *IMMEDIATE CRACK OF LIGHTNING, THUNDER*

LUCY: Spirit...Spirit

SPIRIT: I am here, Lucy Bell.

LUCY: Why did you torment my husband and my family? Which of us wronged you? What revenge were you seeking for?

SPIRIT: John Bell never told you?

LUCY: My husband was a firm man and kept his own counsel.

SPIRIT: John Bell never told you of the first night I visited him?

LUCY: Come now, I'm losing my patience with you. Before I die, I want to know why you picked the Bell family to haunt.

SOUND: *VERY LOUD CRACK OF LIGHTNING; DISTANT Thunder APPROACHING*

SPIRIT: The heavens opened and the earth was as dark as a stack of black cats when I first spoke to your husband, John Bell (FADING). It was a bitter night in your year 1818, with the storm prowling about the house like a great beast...



SOUND: LIGHTING, THUNDER, WIND UP FULL: HOLD.
FADE TO Background UNDER GRANDFATHER CLOCK
STRIKING TWELVE.

JOHN: Tarnation, that clock's slow again.
(SHOUTING) Lucy, did you move the hands on this clock?
(PAUSE)

SOUND: *A CRACK OF LIGHTNING*

JOHN: (SHOUTING AGAIN) Lucy! Blasted storm, blasted clock
(TO HIMSELF) By my watch it won't be midnight for
another thirteen minutes.

SPIRIT: It is midnight now, John Bell...

JOHN: Eh? Lucy? Where are you?

SPIRIT: I am not your wife. Stop staring into the mirror, you cannot see a spirit.

JOHN: Spirit? ...Lord in heaven, who are you?

SPIRIT: Do not blaspheme.

JOHN: Who's talking...Where are you?

SPIRIT: Your hands are trembling. Sit down.

JOHN: No. No. I'm getting out of here...

SPIRIT: Sit down! (HARD SLAP)

JOHN: (DRAWS A SOBBING BREATH)

SPIRIT: Sit down, I said, or I'll slap you again...
That's better.
Do you remember the widow, Kate Batts?

JOHN: (WHISPERING) Yes...

SPIRIT: Speak up! Do you remember the widow, Kate Batts?

JOHN: Yes, She died a spell back.

SPIRIT: She died...in bitter poverty, alone, without friends in the
house or food in the cupboard.
Why, John Bell?



(PAUSE. THEN, QUIETLY)

How much did you pay the widow Batts for her farm?

JOHN: Eight hundred dollars.

SPIRIT: How much was it worth?

JOHN: ...Eight hundred dollars...

SPIRIT: How much was it worth?

JOHN: It was stumpy land, needed clearin'...

SPIRIT: (CRESCENDO) How much was it worth?

JOHN: (FRIGHTENED) I had to clear out the creek bed an'...
(HARD SLAP)

SPIRIT: How much was it worth, John Bell?

JOHN: I - - - I don't know - - -

SOUND:
BEHIND GROWING ROLL OF THUNDER APPROACHING

SPIRIT: It was worth five thousand and you know it in your black and thieving heart. For eight hundred miserable dollars you bought thirty years of my husband's toil, thirty years of my family's sweat...and thirty years of my life.

JOHN: Then...then you..!

SPIRIT: I am the spirit of Kate Batts, returned to this earth for revenge.

SOUND: CRACK OF LIGHTNING

MUSIC: SWEEPS OVER AND OUT

How would you complete this tale?

**Continue the script with your own version of
the Legend of the Bell Witch!**